University of Queensland Papers

FACULTY OF ARTS

Volume 1 1960 Number 4

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Price: Two Shillings

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS
BRISBANE

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Meyer and Mérimée

A study of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's *Das Amulett* and its relationship to Prosper Mérimée's *Chronique du règne de Charles IX*.

by

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Prosper Mérimée's novel *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* appeared in 1829. It was his first long narrative work and, like Alfred de Vigny's *Cinq-Mars*, was a product of the wave of enthusiasm for the historical novel inspired in France by the works of Sir Walter Scott. Mérimée, who was only twenty-six when the novel was published, soon moved on to narrative of a different type, but his *Chronique* remained a popular work.

It is probable that Conrad Ferdinand Meyer was acquainted with Mérimée's novel from quite an early age. Not only was Meyer exceptionally well versed in French literature, but he had begun the serious study of French history at the age of eighteen. As the Wars of Religion held a particular fascination for Meyer, it was inevitable that he should soon make the acquaintance of Mérimée's novel in his historical studies even if he had not already done so in his literary studies. When Meyer began to write his first narrative prose work—the Novelle *Das Amulett*—in the early 1870s, he chose the Wars of Religion as the setting and drew heavily on Mérimée's *Chronique* for subject matter. Meyer did not at any time deny his debt to Mérimée but none the less regarded *Das Amulett* as an independent and original work and also considered it one of his finest achievements.

Literary scholarship since Meyer has seldom agreed with his estimate of *Das Amulett*. In most studies of Meyer *Das Amulett* is dismissed as an early exercise in the Novelle form based on Mérimée's *Chronique*. The extent of Meyer's debt to Mérimée is not worked out, and no attempt is made to discuss Meyer's Novelle as an independent work of art. Sometimes the statements made about *Das Amulett* are far from complimentary to the work and to the author's artistic integrity. F. F. Baumgarten calls it "eine ganz unselbständige Erstlingsarbeit, eine schülerhafte Entlehnung aus Prosper Mérimée."[1] Gustav Steiner claims that in Meyer's Novelle "ganze Gedankengänge entsprechen bis auf wörtliche Uebereinstimmungen der französischen Vorlage."[2]

James M. Clark, in his introduction to a 1955 English school edition of *Das Amulett*, endeavoured to show that Meyer's debt to Mérimée is not as great as is often claimed and that *Das Amulett* is by no means lacking in artistic qualities. Clark's treatment was necessarily brief, but it was an important step towards the rehabilitation of *Das Amulett*. This paper endeavours to go a step further in the same direction by analysing more closely the extent of Meyer's debt to Mérimée and at the same time analysing in greater detail the Novelle itself.

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1 Baumgarten, *Das Werk C. F. Meyers*, p. 196.
2 Steiner, Introduction to vol. 3 of Meyer's *Werke*.

The extent to which Meyer borrowed the subject matter of *Das Amulett* from Mérimée's novel is best shown by a comparison of the plots of the two works.

The plot of Mérimée's *Chronique* is briefly as follows: a young French Huguenot named Bernard Mergy is on his way to Paris to take service in the army that Coligny is raising to fight in Flanders. Bernard spends a night in an inn near Paris and here makes the acquaintance of a group of German mercenaries under Captain Dietrich Hornstein. In Paris Bernard meets his brother George, who has turned Catholic, is a Captain in the light horse and is stationed in the Louvre. George explains that he really has no religious beliefs and has joined up with the king's soldiers mainly because he has been badly treated by Condé. The two brothers go to a fashionable Catholic church and hear a sermon preached by Père Lubin. The sermon is anti-Huguenot but not inflammatory. During the service Bernard is greatly attracted to the beautiful Diane, countess of Turgis, who, as it later turns out, is being wooed by a famous duellist named Comminges. Bernard is presented to Coligny and later receives a commission from the king. George invites Bernard to the royal hunt and Diane's interest in Bernard becomes so apparent that Comminges grows jealous, picks a quarrel with Bernard and they agree to fight a duel. During the hunt Diane gives Bernard a small metal box to wear round his neck as an amulet. When the duel takes place, Comminges' rapier hits the box and Bernard kills Comminges before he can recover. Bernard is slightly wounded and is hidden in a house belonging to Béville, who was Comminges' second. George approaches Coligny and asks him to secure a pardon for Bernard, but Coligny insults George. A pardon comes for Bernard from the Queen and it is clear that it has been secured by Diane. Soon afterwards Diane becomes Bernard's mistress. The king sends for George and asks him to assassinate Coligny. George refuses and sends an anonymous note to warn Coligny. Meanwhile Diane is trying hard to convert Bernard to Catholicism, but without success. The day after the wedding of Henry of Navarre George is sent with his light horse to Meaux. Then follows the attempt on Coligny's life by Maurevel. Bernard is cornered in the street by a mob but is saved by Père Lubin. On the evening of 24th August, 1572, George re-enters Paris with his light horse and is commanded by Maurevel to conduct the massacre in a particular quarter of the city. George refuses, resigns his commission and goes off to find his brother. Meanwhile Bernard is at Diane's house. She is begging him to turn Catholic and save his life. Then the massacre begins. George arrives at Diane's house and she agrees to hide the two brothers. The remainder of the action takes place in the provinces when the first fury of the massacre is over. Bernard has escaped and is trying to make his way to the Huguenot fortress of La Rochelle. He is disguised as a monk and meets Captain Dietrich Hornstein, who is also disguised as a monk. They reach La Rochelle and assist in its defence. During a sortie against the king's troops Bernard's men capture and grievously wound a royal officer. It is George, who soon afterwards dies in the hospital of La Rochelle. George dies an atheist.

At the beginning of *Das Amulett,* Meyer claims to have before him a manuscript from the beginning of the seventeenth century. He translates the manuscript into modern German. The author of the manuscript, Hans Schadau, tells how, in the year 1611, the sight of some objects in the possession of an old man named Boccard inspired him to set down the full story of his relationship with the old man's son. After describing his youth in a Calvinist area of Switzerland, Schadau tells how, in 1572, at the age of nineteen, he set off for Paris to take service with Coligny. On the way he encounters in an inn three people whose destinies are interwoven with his own: a French Huguenot named

Châtillon, a young woman named Gasparde who is supposed to be Châtillon's niece but is actually the illegitimate daughter of Coligny's brother Dandelot, and a young Swiss Catholic named Wilhelm Boccard, who has infinite faith in the powers of Our Lady of Einsiedeln and always carries as an amulet a silver medallion with her image.

In Paris Schadau becomes one of Coligny's personal clerks. He is even present during a conversation between the Admiral and the unstable Charles IX. He also gains an idea of the general attitude to the Huguenots when he and Gasparde hear an inflammatory sermon preached by the Franciscan Pater Panigarola. Schadau also comes into contact again with Boccard and the two become firm friends. Schadau is involved in a quarrel with the Count of Guiche, who has been pursuing Gasparde. They agree to fight a duel. Unbeknown to Schadau, Boccard slips his silver amulet into Schadau's breast-pocket before the duel begins. Guiche is soon in a position where he can run Schadau through the heart, but his blade strikes the amulet. Before Guiche can recover, Schadau kills him. The outcome of the duel causes a sensation, but Schadau does not reveal to Coligny that he is responsible for the death of Guiche.

A month later Schadau returns from a mission to Orleans to find that an attempt has been made to assassinate Coligny and that Montaigne is trying to persuade Châtillon to leave Paris. Coligny summons Schadau and Gasparde to his bedside, has them married by a clergyman and tells them to leave Paris at once. While Gasparde is still with Châtillon, Boccard appears and insists that Schadau should come to the Louvre. Schadau is then forcibly locked in Boccard's apartments. It is 24th August, 1572, St. Bartholomew's Day. The massacre of the Huguenots takes place while Schadau is locked in the Louvre. In the morning Schadau is released by Boccard. Schadau reveals that he is married and persuades Boccard to try to save Gasparde. They reach Châtillon's lodgings in time to see the old man killed and Gasparde threatened by a crowd of armed men. They save her, but Boccard is killed by a bullet fired by one of the attackers from Schadau's own pistol. With the aid of one of the king's soldiers whom Schadau had once helped escape from justice in Switzerland, Schadau and Gasparde escape from Paris and make their way back to Switzerland.

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That Meyer has drawn fairly heavily on Mérimée for subject matter is apparent merely from these brief summaries of the two plots. Manifestly the similarity between the two works goes beyond similarity of setting, period, historical incident and historical characters to similarity of basic plot, fictional incident and fictional characters. Most striking is Meyer's borrowing of the motif and incident of the amulet with only slight modification, though we shall see later that each author attaches a quite different significance of the amulet. There are also striking similarities of minor incident: e.g. the setting of the initial incident in an inn in both works and the part played by the sermon in both. More important is the similarity of the basic situation in both works: two men who are close to each other (family ties in Mérimée's *Chronique,* ties of friendship in *Das Amulett*) are of opposite faith and on opposite sides in the religious struggle.

Despite the statement by Gustav Steiner quoted above, Meyer's debt to Mérimée does not extend to textual borrowings. Certainly the two texts sound

somewhat alike when the authors are talking about the same thing: e.g. their descriptions of the scenes of horror during and after the massacre, or when Meyer, in talking of Boccard's indifference to theological discussions, says "Ich verstehe nichts von der Theologie" (Chapter 3) and Mérimée makes George express a similar idea in the words: "Nous faisons peu de cas des conversations théologiques" (Chapter 3). There is, however, only one sentence in Meyer's story in which he uses the same words as Mérimée, and in this sentence both authors are quoting from the bible: the words of Matthew 18, 9 — "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." However, the quotation occurs in quite different contexts: in Meyer in Panigarola's sermon and in Mérimée in a passage in which the author describes George's father's attitude towards his apostate son (Chapter 3).

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The differences between the two works are, however, far more striking than the similarities. These differences may be summarized as follows:

(1) Meyer's changing of the nationality of the two protagonists from French to Swiss.

(2) Meyer's introduction of an ethical element that is largely lacking in Mérimée's novel.

(3) Meyer's use of the chronical and first-person framework technique as opposed to Mérimée's technique of authorial omniscience.

(4) The many differences consequent upon Meyer's turning of Mérimée's rather loosely constructed novel into a comparatively short, self-contained Novelle.

(1) In making Hans Schadau and Wilhelm Boccard a *Swiss* Protestant and a *Swiss* Catholic respectively, Meyer did more than enhance the appeal of his story to Swiss and German readers. He created two characters who were able, to some extent at least, to stand aloof from the French religious struggle in which they found themselves involved. Certainly there is no question of their being impartial observers—both are committed to action with the sides with which they have thrown in their lot. Yet they are not linked indissolubly to the past and the future of the events in which they find themselves involved, and in this they differ completely from the Mergy brothers in Mérimée's novel. For the Mergy brothers the French religious struggles are their lives: for the two Swiss the French religious struggles need be only an episode with a definite beginning and a definite end. This fact affects the form of both works: whereas Mérimée's novel is, as the title states, a chronicle of a brief period with little background to that period and an abrupt, open ending, Meyer's Novelle is neatly rounded, with a clear beginning, and a clear end. The difference emerges strikingly in the presentation of the backgrounds of the principal figures: Mérimée begins "in medias res" and later sketches in the background of the Mergy brothers very briefly; Meyer, on the other hand, begins "ab ovo" and devotes a long chapter to the life of Hans Schadau before his departure for France. This chapter serves not only as background to the hero's life but also as general historical background and as a kind of overture to the main part of the story. Not only is the reader made familiar with the historical period involved, but the main themes of the work are touched upon lightly: to retain the musical image, what is later presented by full orchestra is here played by a few muted instruments. There are

no religious wars in Switzerland, and yet fierce emotion can be aroused merely by such things as Schadau's criticism of Alba. This theme of religious conflict is suggested also in the framework when old Boccard says that the Virgin of Einsiedeln has lost her power since heresy entered the country, and again, in lighter mood, in the third chapter when young Boccard describes the attitude to him of the girls from Protestant Bern. Similarly Meyer suggests in the introductory chapters that Bienne is peaceful and secluded, yet the brief episode of the Bohemian fencing-master brings into this peace and seclusion a suggestion of a different world: a world of crime, violence and deception.

The two introductory chapters serve yet another purpose. Despite religious differences and the mysterious fencing-master, the world these chapters describe is peaceful and happy. When in the final chapter Schadau and Gasparde stand upon the mountain and look down upon this part of Switzerland with its promise of peace and happiness, a circle is closed; the conflict, chaos and horror of the preceding months is over; the end has joined with the beginning.

(2) In Mérimée's novel George Mergy is presented as an opportunist with no real religious convictions. Bernard Mergy is presented as a sincere but frivolous Huguenot. His frivolity is most striking in his amorous adventures: with the gypsy camp-follower at the inn, with the Spanish lady who is really Diane in disguise, and with Diane undisguised. Neither of the brothers is much concerned with the fundamentals of the faith to which each adheres and neither appears to be guided in all situations by either the principles of his faith or the voice of his conscience. Meyer, on the other hand, makes Schadau and Boccard completely upright and completely sincere representatives of their respective faiths. Boccard is presented as light-hearted, gay and fun-loving, little concerned with theological questions, unusually tolerant for the age (except on the question of the Virgin of Einsiedeln), and yet sincere and genuine in his religious beliefs. Schadau lacks the gaiety of Boccard: indeed he seems to be characterized by a certain joylessness. He makes a staid, solid, even stolid impression, is undemonstrative and at the same time much more intolerant than Boccard—witness his attitude to the heretic Servetus (in Chapter 4). At the same time he is as sincere and genuine in his beliefs as Boccard and equally upright in his conduct, though one might question the ethics of his failure to tell Coligny that he was responsible for the death of Guiche. An important feature of Schadau is his concern with the fundamentals of his faith, especially with the doctrine of predestination. In describing his boyhood in the second chapter, Schadau says that his mind was attracted by the strict logic of Calvinist doctrine while his heart belonged to the gentler, unorthodox views of his uncle. Predestination is a major part of the conversation of Schadau, Boccard, Châtillon and Gasparde, and Schadau's view of the approaching duel with Guiche is expressed in the sentence "Alles ist vorherbestimmt". In this preoccupation with predestination Meyer is expressing some of his own personal problems. Indeed it seems probable that Schadau has many of Meyer's own characteristics. Throughout much of his life Meyer was concerned with the implications of the strict Calvinist doctrine in which he had been reared and its conflict with contrary doctrines such as those of Pascal. This conflict seems to be reflected in *Das Amulett* not only in the figures of Schadau and Boccard but also within Schadau himself, who, as the statement about his head and his heart might suggest, seems a little reluctant to believe in divine logic rather than divine love. And yet the story itself is the triumph of predestination, of divine logic rather than divine love. The one who dies is Boccard, who has limitless faith in divine grace and in the powers of his amulet: the one the amulet saves is Schadau, who regards faith in the amulet as blind superstition and for whom divine grace is necessarily meaningless.

At the same time it must not be overlooked that problems of conscience as well as doctrine are involved. Both Boccard and Schadau must make decisions that are ultimately decisions of the individual conscience and transcend all church dogma. These decisions occur in Chapter 8. Boccard has already disobeyed the commands of his church by saving Schadau from the massacre, but this action could be justified on the grounds that the command is to kill French Huguenots and Schadau is a Swiss Calvinist. Now, however, Schadau calls upon Boccard to save Gasparde. Boccard hesitates but agrees to try to save this woman whose death he, theoretically, should not hinder. Schadau's decision is less momentous but none the less difficult. He, the strictest of Calvinists, begs Boccard to let him go to Gasparde and at last begs him in the name of the Holy Virgin of Einsiedeln! With these decisions and the actions consequent upon them it is as though the two men meet in a higher sphere—a sphere of pure humanity above the futility and stupidity of all dogma. The unity of these two spirits after disunity has reached its ultimate point in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day suggests the possibility of reconciliation and of harmony, a suggestion that is strengthened when Boccard, the pure of heart and spirit, dies as though to atone for the slaughter of the preceding night.

(3) The third major difference between Mérimée's novel and Meyer's Novelle is one of technique; Mérimée's *Chronique* is a third-person novel with occasional intrusions by the author in the first person; Meyer's Novelle is a first-person story with a fairly elaborate framework. The reader is struck at once by Meyer's use of a double framework, basically the framework of the chronicle Novelle plus the framework of the "Erinnerungsnovelle". The author begins with the fiction that he is transcribing an old manuscript into modern German. The manuscript itself then contains a framework in which the narrator explains how and why he is writing down events that had happened to him thirty-nine years earlier. The first framework obviously does more than create a distance between the author and his story: it also creates verisimilitude. What follows is ostensibly not a story of the sixteenth century by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer but a story of the sixteenth century by a man who had himself lived through the events narrated.

The reader may then be tempted to ask what is gained by the second framework. The story told by the narrator would obviously have been just as complete if it had begun with Chapter 2. The gains are several. We have already suggested that the first two chapters have something of the effect of an overture. Themes are touched upon lightly that are later developed on a large scale. In addition the first chapter (the framework) is full of foreshadowings, both in the form of hints and definite statements. Curiosity is aroused as to why Schadau should have reason to be especially kind to old Boccard, why the medallion and the hat should move them both so deeply, and how Wilhelm Boccard's fate had been linked in a friendly and then almost terrible way with that of Schadau. The reader is told that Boccard is dead and knows that Schadau is still living: the ultimate outcome is never in doubt and yet the reader's curiosity is whetted. Such foreshadowing is one of the oldest and most effective interest-arousing devices in fiction and goes back as far as the Homeric epic. At the same time the second framework serves a further purpose. As we saw above, the story proper is extremely self-contained, a beautifully rounded work that is really complete in itself. The framework both adds to and takes away from this self-contained quality of the story proper. On the one hand it gives us further information about

Schadau's life after the story is over (a long life, apparently happy and reasonably prosperous, a son); at the same time it suggests that, complete though the story may be, the conflict it depicted still exists—the bitterness of Boccard's words, the mention of the son who is fighting in the Netherlands.

A possibility inherent in the framework of the Erinnerungsnovelle, where the events are supposed to be written down many years after their actual occurrence, is the contrast that can be achieved between "then" and "now". The narrator's present sadness may be contrasted with his past happiness or vice versa, his past activity may be contrasted with his present passivity, his youth with his old age, and so on. The effect of such contrasts, which always involve creating an awareness of two time-planes (the narrator's past and the narrator's present), will often be to cast a light veil over the events of the past, to tone down violence and fierce emotion, perhaps to create an atmosphere of pensive melancholy, as often happened in Storm's "Erinnerungsnovellen." Meyer obviously does not seek to achieve this effect to any extent in *Das Amulett*. Some contrast naturally exists between the elderly Schadau living peacefully in Bienne and the youthful Schadau who participates in the stormy happenings of 1572, but the author makes no attempt to exploit this contrast. As befits a story of action and adventure, the story proper is told by the narrator as though it were happening at the time of writing. Only once in the story proper does the narrator return to his own present and remind the reader that the story is being written down long after the event. This occurs in Chapter 8 when Schadau, locked in Boccard's room at the Louvre, looks out of the window and sees the distorted face of Charles IX: "Kein Fiebertraum kann schrecklicher sein als diese Wirklichkeit. Jetzt, da ich das längst Vergangene niederschreibe, sehe ich den Unseligen wieder mit den Augen des Geistes—und ich schaudere."

In the story proper everything is seen through the eyes of the narrator Schadau. Whereas Mérimée, by his use of the technique of the omniscient third person, had been free to range over all of France under Charles IX and to stand inside or outside any or all of his characters, Meyer consciously limits himself to the single perspective of his narrator. Only those occurrences can be included in which Schadau himself participates or about which he hears from others. This limitation, which Meyer often imposed upon himself, brings definite advantages. Historical events are not shown in their broad sweep, but the portion of them that is shown is shown with the extraordinary concentration and vividness that comes from the account of one who himself witnesses and participates in them. Even more important is the opportunity this device gives for dramatic irony. Two types of irony occur in *Das Amulett*: irony of fate and dramatic irony. Irony of fate has already been touched upon in our discussion of predestination in the story—it is irony of fate that the amulet saves Schadau and not Boccard, and it is also irony of fate that the pistol that Gasparde takes from Schadau in jest should later save his life and then kill Boccard. The dramatic irony arises from the contrast between the hero's ignorance of the nature of the approaching events and the reader's knowledge that everything is leading up to the famous massacre. (This is doubtless another reason for Meyer's making his narrator tell the story as though he were participating in it at the time of writing and as though he could not survey the whole of the action. If in the story proper the narrator made it clear that he could survey the whole of the action, there would be less dramatic irony). One of the most striking passages in which this irony is made explicit occurs in Chapter 6 in the conversation between Schadau and his new landlord, the tailor Gilbert. Gilbert talks of earlier persecutions of the Huguenots and Schadau pacifies him with the words: "Habt keine Angst, diese Zeiten sind vorüber, und das Friedensedikt gewährleistet uns allen freie

Religionsübung." And the reader—or at least the reader who has some familiarity with French history—knows that as Schadau says these words the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day is only a few weeks away. Similarly, in the whole of the first half of Chapter 8, Schadau thinks that he has been betrayed by Boccard and arrested by Pfyffer with evil intent, while the words casually uttered by Boccard: "Heute ist nun Bartholomäustag" have made the reader aware of the real nature of the arrest.

(4) In writing a Novelle where Mérimée had written a novel, Meyer again sacrificed breadth for intensity and concentration. Mérimée's novel is intended as a "chronicle of the reign of Charles IX", though it does not in fact cover the whole reign: Meyer's Novelle could be described as a Novelle of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day. Although the massacre is certainly the highlight of Mérimée's novel, the broad sweep of the chronicle includes much that is not strictly relevant to the massacre (such as the elaborated love-story of Bernard and Diane) and also goes beyond it in time to the defence of La Rochelle. *Das Amulett,* on the other hand, includes virtually nothing that is not relevant to the massacre, which is climax, catastrophe and turning-point of the story. It is typical of the approach of the two authors that Mérimée does not merge the historical catastrophe with the personal catastrophe: Diane and Bernard are separated but still love each other: Bernard remains on the Huguenot side, George remains on the Catholic side; thus some of the conflict is simply transferred to La Rochelle. Meyer, on the other hand, achieves coincidence of the historical catastrophe and the personal catastrophe. In roughly twenty-four hours from about midday on 24th August to about midday on 25th August, 1572, Meyer presents not only the massacre itself but also the happy or tragic resolution of all the personal conflicts and relationships in his story: Gasparde is deprived of her guardian and godfather but gains a husband: Boccard is killed: Schadau is deprived of his friend but gains Gasparde as his wife and makes good his escape with her from Paris. In addition, as was indicated above, it is in the massacre that the ideal and ethical content of the Novelle achieves its full expression: in the moment of open and bloody conflict between Catholic and Protestant, Boccard and Schadau transcend all dogma and achieve unity in a higher sphere of pure humanity. To make the link between the personal and the historical even stronger, Meyer connects his central fictional figures much more closely than Mérimée with the central historical figures in the great conflict. Châtillon bears the same family name as Coligny, Gasparde is really Coligny's niece, Schadau is one of Coligny's personal clerks.

In leading up to the climax of the massacre, Meyer omits almost everything that does not contribute directly to setting the stage for the conflict and to creating the atmosphere of ever-increasing tension that existed in Paris in 1572. There is in *Das Amulett* no attempt at historical local colour merely to show off the author's historical knowledge or to give the reader a broad picture of the time: there is, for example, nothing that corresponds to the two long inn scenes or to the royal hunt in Mérimée. Such historical local colour as Meyer creates is strictly relevant to the understanding of the religious conflict and the creation of the atmosphere of tension. In addition Meyer makes no attempt to elaborate the psychological aspects of the situation. Although Meyer's works are treated by Bennett in *The German Novelle* under "The Psychological Novelle", it is questionable whether this label is in any way applicable to *Das Amulett.* The characters, though vivid and alive, are basically uncomplicated and are presented through externals with little attempt at analysis. This is natural enough in a work in which the stress is on action and in which the narrator is the central

character. At the same time the narrator himself indulges in very little self-analysis and in relatively little detailed depiction of his own thoughts and emotions. His falling in love with Gasparde is treated in a very cursory fashion, and it is only in the account of the night spent locked in Boccard's room that the narrator's thoughts and emotions are in the foreground for more than a few lines.

Everywhere Meyer practises the maximum compression with material that is not relevant to the central theme. The most obvious example occurs in Chapter 7 when Schadau is sent on the mission to Orleans. The incident is covered in one and a half sentences: "Coligny sandte mich mit einem Auftrage nach Orléans, wo deutsche Reiterei lag. Als ich von dort zurückkehrte . . .". However, Meyer's compression does not extend to essentials. His technique in this, as in his later works, is to develop the plot through a series of close-ups rather than through narrative report. (The two basic types of presentation in any novel or Novelle may be described as "epischer Bericht" and "szenische Darstellung". With Meyer it is always the latter that predominates.) Compared with many nineteenth century authors, Meyer's work contains little straight narrative: he prefers the scene to the narrative: i.e. conversation or a detailed close-up of an incident. Only in the expository second chapter does narrative report predominate in *Das Amulett*. In the remainder of the work the author uses a series of significant scenes linked by very brief narrative. The scenes are carefully divided into chapters and each chapter is carefully dated in the opening sentence: "The second evening after this meeting", "the next morning", "a month had passed", and so on. In addition Meyer makes each of the chapters from 2 to 6 inclusive cover a single day, or rather a selection of significant scenes from a single day. It will be noted that Chapter 3 contains only one scene but Chapters 4 to 7 inclusive each contain three scenes. In the single scene of Chapter 3 the protagonists are brought together in harmony and friendship. In the following chapters one of the three scenes involves direct conflict, or the threat of direct conflict, between the two sides. There is, indeed, progressive intensification of this conflict: in Chapter 4 the threat contained in the sermon and the reaction of the congregation: in Chapter 5 the quarrel of Schadau and Guiche: in Chapter 6 the killing of Guiche by Schadau: in Chapter 7 there is a kind of lull before the storm with no scene involving direct conflict, though the atmosphere of tension and foreboding is heightened by the knowledge that an attempt has been made to assassinate Coligny. In Chapters 8 and 9 there is no longer any question of a division into isolated scenes or of fitting each chapter to the incidents of one day. Chapters 8 and 9 are a direct continuation of Chapter 7: the conflict has now reached its climax in the massacre and these two chapters are devoted to the events of a few hours.

What has been said above indicates one of the basic characteristics of all of Meyer's work: the seeking after and achievement of the greatest possible clarity of form. The neat division into chapters, the almost symmetrical division of chapters into scenes, the exact dating of each chapter—these characteristics suggest Meyer's detestation of the loose, the haphazard and the chaotic. The same desire for formal clarity is apparent with the individual scene. Meyer's scenes have a plastic clarity and vividness that are often cited as evidence of his Romance rather than German style. In a few sentences Meyer can succeed in creating a picture of extraordinary vividness. He is at his best in presenting faces or groups of figures: as in the description of Gasparde and Châtillon towards the end of Chapter 3, the word-picture of Coligny's face early in Chapter 4, and especially the almost incredibly vivid representation of the King, the Queen Mother and Anjou in Chapter 8. Such description could no doubt be

termed static description (i.e. description that does not advance or even retards the action.) Yet its plasticity and vividness, its brevity, its richness in atmospheric or symbolic significance so enhance the work that the term static is not appropriate.

Finally, there is the motif and the incident of the amulet itself. In Mérimée's novel the amulet incident is only one incident among many, and the motif of the amulet begins and ends with the various stages of the duel between Bernard and Comminges. In Meyer's story, on the other hand, the amulet gives the work its title and is of central importance throughout. It is first of all the "Falke" that occurs in so many Novellen: the concrete object that plays an important part in the story, helps to identify the story unmistakably in the reader's memory and assumes the quality of a symbol. The amulet appears in Chapters 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9, playing its most important part when it saves the life of Schadau in Chapter 6. In addition there is mention of the Virgin of Einsiedeln at the end of Chapter 5, though the amulet itself is not mentioned at this point. Thus the amulet recurs throughout the story, particularly at moments of crisis, and it becomes richer in associations with each recurrence. It is the symbol of Boccard's Catholic faith and yet it is also the object that has saved Schadau's life. Thus it has associations with both the central figures, with the two conflicting religions, and with the dogma-transcending decisions of conscience made by both men. Thus the essence of the Novelle is in the amulet, and it is most appropriate that the amulet should give the title to the work.

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Other aspects of the two works could profitably be compared and contrasted: e.g. Mérimée's amoral Diane and Meyer's extremely moral and rather colourless Gasparde, or Mérimée's broad, vivid treatment of the massacre and Meyer's device of locking his narrator in a room while the worst of the massacre is in progress. But enough has been said already to show the essential similarities and differences between the two works. In fact Meyer drew no more heavily on Mérimée's novel than countless authors of historical novels or Novellen have drawn on other sources before and since. The only unusual and perhaps questionable aspect of Meyer's borrowing is that he should have drawn on a fairly popular novel, the author of which had died only three years before *Das Amulett* appeared. But the important point is not so much the extent of Meyer's borrowing as the quality of the work that he created with the aid of the borrowed material. Few who have closely studied *Das Amulett* would deny the accuracy of Meyer's own judgment of it: "eine feine Arbeit".

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